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Message Text

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----------102264 080355Z /12
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TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

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SUBJECT: MODE - APHIS SCREWWORM ERADICATION PROJECT IN MEXICO
REF: (A) MEXICO A-234, 7/23/76; (B) MEXICO A-42 (1978)

1. REPRESENTATIVES FROM ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE (APHIS) IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) RECENTLY DESCRIBED TO DEPARTMENT OFFICERS THE PROBLEMS SLOWING THE PHASE DOWN OF THE SCREWWORM PROJECT, WHICH REF (A) PROJECTED WOULD BEGIN DURING THIS YEAR. CURRENT APHIS PROGNOSIS FORESEES NO SIGNIFICANT PHASE DOWN OF USG PARTICIPATION FOR MANY MONTHS, PERHAPS SEVERAL YEARS.

2. ACCORDING TO APHIS SPOKESMEN, TWO PRIMARY IMPEDIMENTS IN
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ACCOMPLISHING PROJECT GOALS ARE (A) SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF MEXICAN WORKERS COMPETENT TO PERFORM THE "HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED" TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE ERADICATION PROGRAM (E.G. COMPETENT MECHANICS CAPABLE OF REPAIRING AND MAINTAINING DC-6 AIRCRAFT), AND (U) INTERRUPTIONS IN LEADERSHIP DUE TO THE UNEXPECTED TRANSFER OF TRAINED MEXICANS THROUGHOUT THE ORGANIZATION'S HIERARCHY FOLLOWING CHANGES IN THE POLITI-

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CAL SCENE. APHIS REPS ALSO SUGGESTED THAT SEVERAL INCIDENTS OF FRAUD AND THEFT AMONG PROGRAM WORKERS (CF. MEXICO 20896,

,2/15/77) MAY REQUIRE ADDITION OF ONE OR TWO INVESTIGATORS TO APHIS STAFF. AS DESCRIBED TO US, THE SCREWWORM ERADICATION PROJECT NOT ONLY LAGS FAR BEHIND ITS TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION BUT ITS EARLY ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE BECOMING UNDONE, E.G. AREAS WHERE THE SCREWWORM WAS ONCE ERADICATED ARE BECOMING REINFESTED.

3. IN APRIL MEMBERS OF THE MEXIN GOVERNMENT MET IN WASHINGTON WITH APHIS OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE REMEDIES FOR THE ABOVE-MENTIONED PROBLEMS. A FOLLOW-UP MEETING AT THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY LEVEL OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS WILL BE HELD JUNE 21 AT MONTERREY, MEXICO TO ASSESS WHETHER OR NOT ACTIONS RECOMMENDED AT THE EARLIER MEETING ARE FEASIBLE AND ARE CAPABLE OF IMPROVING THE PRESENT SITUATION. DR. WILLIAMS, AMERICAN CO-DIRECTOR OF THE SCREWWORM COMMISSION, SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THE EMBASSY WITH COMPLETE DETAILS CONCERNING THESE MEETINGS AND THE APHIS DIALOGUE WITH GOM.

4. APHIS SPOKESMEN STATED THAT EMBASSY HAS BEEN KEPT FULLY APPRISED OF VARIOUS TROUBLES BESETTING THIS PROJECT. PARAGRAPH ON PAGE 10 IN EMBASSY A-42, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS EMBASSY HAS DIFFERENT PERCEPTION OF SITUATION THAN APHIS/W
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REPS HAVE, PERHAPS BECAUSE PERTINENT DATA ARE NOT EXCHANGED OR EVALUATED IN SAME CONTEXT. DEPARTMENT IS SHARING WITH USDA AND APHIS THE RELEVANT PASSAGES IN A-42, AND PLANS FURTHER INTER-AGENCY DIALOGUE ON THE QUESTION HERE LATER THIS MONTH.

5. PROGRAM'S FAILURE TO KEEP EVEN DELAYED SCHEDULE FOR U.S. STAFFING PHASE DOWN IS ONLY ONE OF THE DISAPPOINTING CONSEQUENCES. BECAUSE SITUATION APPEARS SERIOUS AND EVEN DETERIORATING, DEPARTMENT WONDERS ABOUT MERIT OF (A) APPROACHING VERY SENIOR MEXICAN AUTHORITIES TO REGENERATE ADEQUATE HOST COUNTRY INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION AND (B) RESORT TO DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO SCREWWORM ERADICATION (E.G. MORE EMPHASIS ON CONTRACTORS TO SUPPLY SPECIAL SERVICES OR SKILLS DIFFICULT TO FIND AND KEEP IN PROJECT'S REGULAR MEXICAN WORK FORCE). WE ALSO WONDER TO WHAT EXTENT THE SETBACKS FOR SCREWWORM PROJECT REPRESENT A BAD OMEN FOR APHIS EFFORTS TO COMBAT MEDITERRANEAN FRUIT FLY.

6. TO FACILITATE DISCUSSIONS WITH USDA HERE, WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF EMBASSY WOULD MONITOR THE UPCOMING JUNE 21 MEETING AND THEN GIVE ITS FRANK APPRAISAL OF APHIS MAJOR

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PEST ERADICATION PROGRAMS IN MEXICO TO DATE. WE WOULD PARTICULARLY WELCOME ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR OVERCOMING IMPEDIMENTS IDENTIFIED BY APHIS (PARA TWO ABOVE) AND A FRESH

PROGNOSIS AS TO WHEN MEXICANS MAY BE ABLE TO OPERATE SCREWWORM PROJECT SUCCESSFULLY AND AMERICAN WORKERS CAN BEGIN DEPARTING. VANCE

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